SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE FOR PEACE

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NEWSLETTER
Volume 2, Number 3

"The Defense Department cannot and should not assume responsibility for creating or maintaining levels of economic activity." – U.S. Chamber of Commerce

March 1988
Editor: Mark Bagley

More Than 4000 Demonstrate to Stop Nuclear Arms Tests in Nevada

March 12th over 4000 people converged on the Nevada Test Site to witness against continued testing and development of new and destabilizing nuclear weapons. Among these were over 40 people from the Eastern Sierra. This demonstration was the largest yet at the remote nuclear test site. During the course of the ten-day action over 1800 demonstrators were arrested and cited for tresspassing. This was the largest civil disobediance action ever in opposition to nuclear testing.

The action began with lighting of a "flame of Hope" with a torch lit from the eternal flame at the Hiroshima Memorial in Japan. A welcome was extended from a survivor of Hiroshima and a Western Shoshone spiritual leader. Radio personality Casey Kasem emceed as a series of speakers followed with messages of alarm, vision, hope and committment. Speakers included SANE/Freeze Pres. Rev. William Sloan Coffin, Pat and Daniel Ellsberg, Cesar Chavez, and Peter Yarrow.

Directly following the rally, over a 1000 people formed a human chain stretching for nearly a mile along the test site fence. On signal they peacefully crossed the fence as they attempted to "reclaim the test site" for peaceful purposes.

The peace encampment opposite the Test Site continued all week. Smaller actions were held each day, culminating in 150 arrests on Saturday, bringing the ten-day total to 1800.

In the aftermath of the action, many will ask if it was successful. Testing has not stopped and research on destabilizing first-strike nuclear weapons continues at the test site. However, the action was covered in all the major media and the public was further exposed to current suicidal poilcy of escalating the nuclear arms race. Much more importantly, 4000 people will now return to work for peace in their own communities. Many will have had their committment renewed at the test site and will work even harder for world peace.

1988 - A "Different Year" for Arms Control Supporters

1988 will not be "business as usual" for arms control and arms reduction supporters. The INF Treaty ratification effort; the presidential and congressional elections; a President in his final months in office working to produce an agreement on 50% cuts; a potential breakdown on reduction talks due to the ABM/Star Wars issues; a summit in the Soviet Union; party conventions in July and Aug. with their national platform statements on Star Wars and other weapons systems; early jockeying for House and Senate leadership positions and a rush to adjourn to enable members to campaign, all make it difficult to predict congressional schedules and actions and the outcome of the 1988 arms control legislative agenda.

With many in Congress looking ahead to serious arms reduction agreements, issues such as the MX, Midgetman, and Trident II (D-5) may become the center of legislative debate in 1988. In addition, efforts to restructure the Star Wars program and remove it as a stumbling block to arms reduction agreements may become a major issue if arms talks falter.

Arms control advocates nationwide will need to keep the pressure on Congress and the Administration to see that Star Wars does not destroy the possibilty of serious arms reductions, that the INF Treaty is ratified and that our demands for a halt to nuclear testing and progress on deep cuts are effectively heard in the Congress and by the Administration.

The congressional elections, when combined with the Presidential primaries and general election in November will, once again, provide arms control supporters with opportunities to heighten the profile of issues, educate candidates and voters on critical arms control issues and to build public awareness and support for future arms control and arms reduction efforts. When arms control supporters got involved in Senate races in 1986, they made a difference. Helping to raise issues, focus debate and encourage candidates to clarify arms control positions convinced many candidates that they could publicly support arms control issues and win. In fact, voters elected pro-arms control Senators in several states, many who had to campaign directly against the President.

Did these elections make a difference? Yes! Ten of 11 of the new Senate Democrats voted to support the SALT Treaty limits, for example. No more than 5 and as few as 3 of the replaced Senators, would have voted the same way. When combined with having the Democrats in control of the Senate to help stop filibusters by anti-arms control Senators and to beat back anti-arms control legislation, the 1986 election made a profound difference on the arms control agenda in the Senate.

The congressional and presidential elections this year may very well-determine the future of arms-reductions efforts and the future of nuclear testing. The ongoing negotiations on testing and 50% reductions during this eleciton year will enable arms control supporters to engage all candidates in discussion and debate on the issues. The legislative success on several key issues in 1987 will also provide a record for incumbents and challengers to debate and will provide the media with ample information for their coverage of candidates and campaigns.

– Excerpted from "The Professional", the Jan 1988 newsletter of the Professionals' Coalition for Nuclear Arms Control.

Economic Consequences of the U.S. Arms Buildup

What has five years of unprecedented military spending done to the US economy? It has created the largest deficit of any one administration in US history ($1.1 trillion so far, including the estimated deficit for FY87 and FY88), larger than the combined deficits of all administrations prior to Reagan's. How have we paid for all that free spending? Sherle Schwenninger and Jerry Sanders of the World Policy Institute explain: "Between 1982 and 1986, the United States borrowed more than $400 billion from abroad - roughly the cost of the cumulative increase in US military spending over the same period. In the process, it transformed itself from the world's largest net creditor into the world's largest debtor." The massive trade deficit means that the US is losing jobs to foreign competition. Even though the dollar has begun to decline against foreign currency, the US will remain a debtor nation through the 1990's even under the best economic circumstances.

Perhaps the most subtle hindrance to an American comeback is our fall from leadership in research and development. One measure of an economy's competitiveness is how much attention it pays to improving its products and perfecting new technologies. Frank Lichtenberg, of the Columbia University Graduate School of Business, has pointed out that while the US, Germany, and Japan devote roughly the same percentate (2.6) of the GNPs to research and development, the US devotes 35% to 40% of that total to military R&D. In contrast, less than 4% of Germany's and 1% of Japan's R&D is military-related. A large chunk of current US military R&D - over $3.5 billion a year - goes to exotic Star Wars research programs that even its recipients admit will probably produce few nonmilitary applications. In the meantime, civilian R&D projects that promise greater economic benefits are neglected.

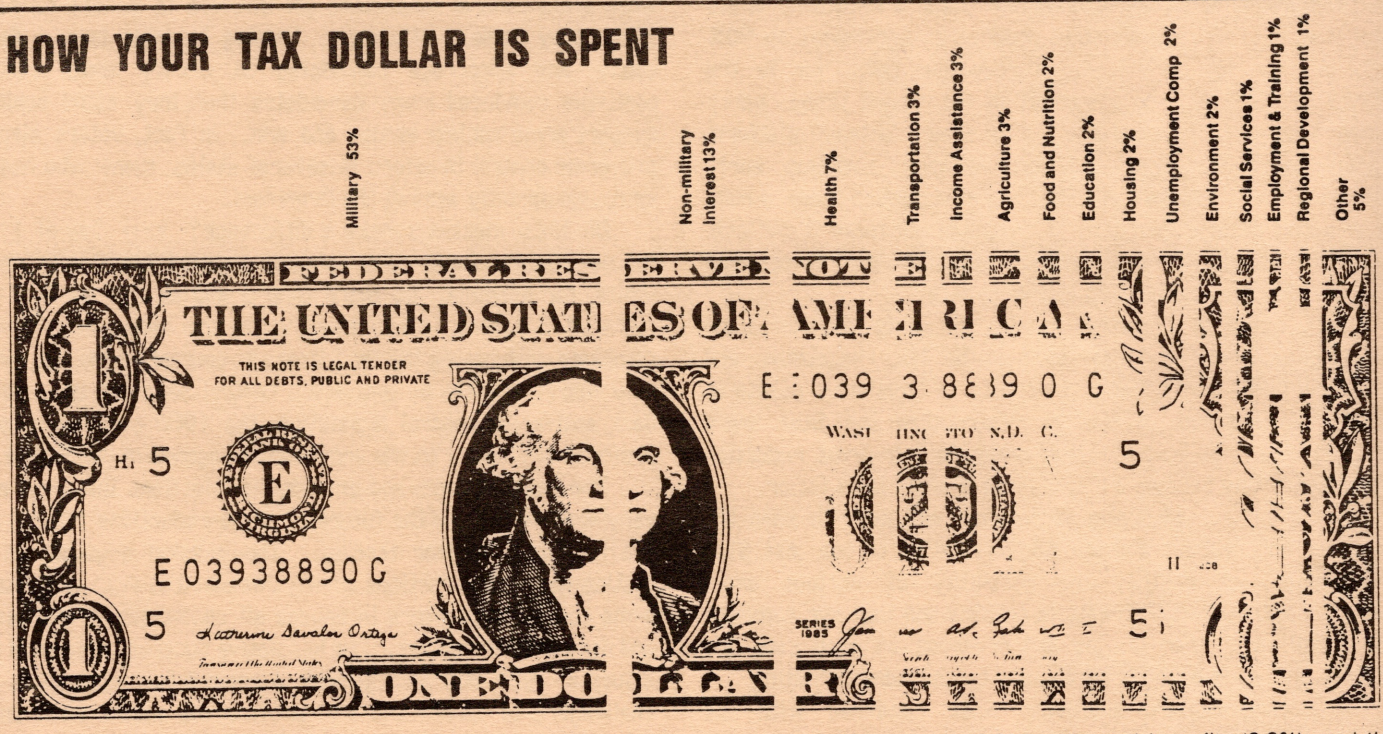
The military R&D figure appears bloated, too, when it is recognized that arms account for only 5% of our exports; the US, then, is devoting over a third of its R&D resources to a product that constitutes only one twentieth of the nation's business. While military R&D serves a larger purpose than simply enhancing our position on the arms export market, this lopsided distribution cripples our ability to become competitive in the other industries that produce 95% of the country's exports. Lichtenberg has put it another way: "A dollar spent on defense R&D does much less to enhance our international competitiveness than does a dollar spent on civilian R&D."

The human costs of the military buildup have also been staggering. While the military budget has increased 40% (after adjustment for inflation) under Reagan, discretionary domestic programs have been cut 21%. Programs slashed or discontinued since 1981 include: low-income energy assistance, cut 23%; food stamps, cut 14%; vocational education, cut 24%; federal student aid, cut 12%; employment and training programs, cut 63%; public service jobs program, abolished; community service block grants, cut 45%; subsidized housing, cut 76.3%; mass transit, cut 41%; juvenile justice assistance, cut 48%; the list goes on and on.

It is difficult to quantify - or even imagine - the human suffering all this has caused, but one measure is government data on Americans in poverty. From 1981 to 1985 (the most recent year with documented figures), 1.3 million Americans slipped below the poverty level.

– Excepted from Sane World; Summer 1987, "Military Mania, Five Years of Runaway Spending Under Reagan" by Rich West.

HOW YOUR TAX DOLLAR IS SPENT



This representation of how your 1987 income tax dollar is spent differs from the government's spending breakdown for two reasons:

1) Many military-related costs that the official budget places in other categories are combined here to reflect the costs of total military spending. In addition to the National Defense Function 050 (36.7% of the total budget), we include military-related interest on the debt (12.3%), veterans' benefits (2.9%), and the international security assistance program (1.1%).
2) Expenditure from trust funds, such as Social Security, has been excluded from the calculation because these are paid for by taxes separate from the income tax.

Next SNAP Meeting

Sunday, April 10th, 6:30 pm

Place: 393 Mt. Tom Rd., Bishop, call 873-8439 for directions

6:30 Meet to socialize

7:00 Announcements - see Carla before this time if you have something to announce to the group

7:10 APT action report and discussion. We will show a video tape of highlights of the action at the Nevada Test Site on March 12th.

7:30 Information and discussion about the economic consequences of the arms buildup - see articles in this newsletter.

8:00 Break and song - refreshments

8:10 Legislative report

8:30 Letter-writing

We were very successful at the last meeting at keeping to the agenda, both in terms of topic and time. Let's keep it up!

Bring the Children!

We consider peace activism to be a family concern! Child care is lovingly provided by David Scheidlinger during meetings, and you are encouraged to bring your children (pre-schoolers on up - infants are your responsibility!). If children are present, we would like to present a special "children's talk" at the beginning of each meeting to let the kids know what we're going to be talking about and why, and to sing some songs that kids know or can learn. High school students are especially invited to SNAP meetings as well. Activate your family, and let them be part of your concern for peace. Call Carla or David at 873-8439 for questions or suggestions. As long as we can really stick to our agenda, and get done before 9:00, it won't be too late a night for the children.

March 6th Meeting

Our March 6 SNAP meeting opened with a song and a presentation by Bob Jellison on nuclear testing. During a discussion of the pros and cons of a Comprhensive Test Ban we discovered the interesting facts that most testing is done to try out "third generation" or "first strike" weapons and that experts agree that testing of individual components, rather than detonation of the whole device, is the best way to ensure reliability. The reliability rational is the one many of us will encounter as we discuss these issues with the community.

Kerry Jellison gave her usual concise and informative legislative report — letters are still needed regarding the INF treaty. After a short letter writing session we had an open discussion of SNAP members' experiences at the Nevada Test Site in order to help potential first time CD'ers decide if they wanted to become arrestees of conscience at the next NTS action "Reclaim the Test Site". After a song to close the meeting we broke early in order to give SNAP affinity groups a chance to meet and discuss logistics for the trip to the NTS.

"If the goal is to provide jobs and employment opportunities, then almost any category of non-military employment will produce more work for one billion dollars than does defense production." — U.S. Dept. of Labor

Activists Head for Boardroom

On August 28th, several Protestant and Catholic church groups filed a sharholder resolution with Emerson Electric Company. The resolution called for economic conversion planning so that if peace breaks out there will be other work for the 5,000 St. Louis employees of the weapons contractor.

Most of Emerson's military production takes place in St. Louis. Those 5,000 jobs generate another 7,000 indirect jobs - subcontractors as well as construction workers, teachers, and clerks at the supermarket. About 12,000 St. Louis jobs depend on the domestic and foreign military sales of this one company.

The church agency-sponsored shareholder resolution asks Emerson to develop plans to diversify military producion in St. Louis, retrain workers, retool facilities, identify new products and markets, and cooperate with local, state or federal economic conversion programs.

It calls for an annual report on the number and job skills of employees dependent on military contracts, and an assesment of employee capacity to transfer skills to civilian producion.

Finally the resolution requests an explanation of corporate policy on weapons manufacture, criteria used by the board of directors for decisions to continue production, and current plans for studying civilian commercial directions like robotics, hydraulics, medical technology, and space exploration.

The shareholder resolution has proven to be a successful approach in St. Louis not just at Emerson Electric, but also at General Dynamics, McDonnell Douglas, and Monsanto. Although these proposals only get a small precentage of the vote, that percentage appears to represent a large number of individual stockholders (as opposed to insitutional investors). On October 2, 1986, Monsanto decided again in response to our resolutions, to discontinue their contract with the Department of Energy to manufacture the ceramic detonators for all nuclear weapons.

— Excerpted from Peace Conversion Times, Mar/April 1988.

Beyond SNAP . . . . News of Interest

This section is for announcements related to peace issues that are beyond SNAP's usual scope of arms control.

Friends Meeting (unprogrammed Quaker worship) is held Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. at the Scheidlinger's at 393 Mt. Tom Rd. We will be meeting on Easter Sunday. Everyone interested is invited. Call 873-8439 for info or directions.

From the Editor

Thank you to this month's contributors and the folks who helped to get this out: Bob & Kerry Jellison, Linda Brown, Irene Yamashita, and Jeff Cook.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT AND ACTION ALERTS

Fiscal Year 1989 Defense Authorization Bill

The Armed Services Committees in both the House and Senate are currently considering the Defense spending bill for 1989. President Reagan's version calls for total spending of $299 billion, including $5 billion for Star Wars (SDI) and $1.7 billion for the MX missile. The full House is expected to vote on defense spending in late April, and the Senate will vote in mid May.

There will be attempts in committee to incorporate some arms control provisions. Other amendments will be introduced when the bill reaches the floor of the House or Senate. In the House, Mavroules (D-MA) and AuCoin (D-OR) are expected to offer an amendment to cut Reagan's request for the MX rail garrison basing mode from $837 million to $100 million. Bennett (D-FL) is expected to be a lead sponsor of an SDI cut again this year. Other arms control amendments will likely include adherence to the ABM treaty and a comprehensive test ban.

ACTION: Write Rep. Bill Thomas (Inyo) or Richard Lehman (Mono) to say that the President's $5 billion request for Star Wars is too much. You may want to mention that SDI represents a serious threat to future arms control efforts.

Help Support SNAP!

The INF Treaty

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has begun meeting to determine its recommendation for Senate consideration of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty. The committee is expected to send the treaty to the Senate without any crippling amendments.

Democratic Senate leaders on the INF Treaty have agreed to attach one condition to the Treaty's resolution of approval. In essence, the condition states that the testimony of Reagan Administration officials to the Senate is the authoritative interpretation of the Treaty to be followed by future Administrations. Any reinterpretation of the Treaty would require Senate consent. The aim of the condition is to bar future administrations from reinterpreting the INF Treaty, as the Reagan Administration has tried to do with the ABM Treaty. Full Senate consideration and final votes on the agreement are anticipated in mid to late April.

Where to Write or Call

Senator _____
Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Hon. Bill Thomas (Inyo) -or-
Hon. Richard Lehman (Mono)
House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Follow your letter with a telephone call, or just call, via the Capitol Hill switchboard at 202-224-3121. If you have specific questions, you can call the Nuclear Arms Control Hotline (Eastern Standard Time) at 202-543-4100, or for a recorded message, call 202-543-0006.

☞ Next SNAP Meeting

Sunday, **April 10th, 6:30 pm.**
The Scheidlinger's,
393 Mt. Tom Rd., Bishop.
For directions call Carla at 873-8439

☞ Steering Committee Meeting

Wednesday, **March 21st, 6:00 pm.**
At 238 Sierra Bonita St.
in the Wilkerson Tract just south of Bishop.
Call 873-6445 for info.

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